

Do you prefer Steve, or Mom? by robustketchup55555

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Summary: Steve is still hurt, but none of the adults notice. Lucas, Dustin, and Max are the doctors.

Do you prefer Steve, or Mom?

I do not own the Duffer brothers, Stranger Things, or any of the actual characters.

Without any further yada yada yada...

El closed the gate. Will was safe. Everyone regrouped and planned to stay the night at the Byers.

Hopper and Mike sit on either sides of El, El nodding off from exhaustion. Neither take their eyes off her.

Joyce has Will encircled in her embrace, and Johnathan is next to them, holding a sleeping Nancy close.

Dustin, Lucas, and Max sit on the kitchen floor, watching Steve. They seem to be the only ones aware that he's hurt more than he let on to Hopper and Joyce.

Max returns from the sink with a glass of water.

"This should do it," Lucas says, and Dustin can't help but grin as she pours the cold water onto Steve's passed out face.

"Steve," Dustin shakes him. "Steve. Wake up."

"Go away, Dustin," Steve says, not using his usual name for the kids.

"Steve, you're hurt. We want to help you." Lucas pleads.

"Ohh, he's got a concussion." Dustin says. "Steve!" He shouts sharply. "Give me the day, month, year, and, uh, the name of your ex-girlfriend!" Dustin shouts.

Steve groans in reply.

"Here's some ice for the eye," Lucas says, taking charge and pushing Dustin out of the way. "Dustin, I need needle and thread. Go find

some." Lucas commands.

"Why? So you can go all out Martha Stewart on us?" Dustin retorts.

"No. So I can give him stitches." Lucas explains, and Dustin heads off.

"Wait-" Steve says, suddenly wide awake. "You're, going to do stitches, on me?" His voice raises an octave.

"I got my first aid patch. Scout's honor," Lucas says, holding his fingers up in a salute.

"Stalker, he's worried it's gonna hurt." Max points out. She's been silent, still figuring this is partially her fault.

"Which is why we need more ice." Lucas hands Steve another ice cube to replace the melted one. "Numb it up, it will hurt less." Lucas says just as Dustin returns with a needle and thread.

"Steve, where's your lighter?" Dustin asks, but Steve has slipped back into unconsciousness, most likely from fear.

"Take mine." Lucas produces his from his pocket, and Dustin uses the flame to cleanse the needle. Max holds Steve's head in place, and Dustin finds some scissors.

After they finish his stitches, they use some towels and clean up his face.

"Anybody have any hairspray?" Dustin asks. He receives some stranger looks. "What? We could put mom's hair back to normal too," Dustin offers, offended. Lucas is focused on Steve's breathing.

"That was a good one," Max says, and manages a small smile.

"Lucas? Earth to Lucas, did you hear my joke? 'Cus I can repeat it, but, then it wouldn't be as funny-" Dustin rambles for miles.

"Something's not right." Lucas stops him.

"What?" Dustin asks, but Max realizes it too.

"His breathing." She says. Dustin realizes it as well. They pull Steve's shirt up to reveal the purple and yellow splotches of rib bruising.

"Ice." Lucas mutters. "More ice."

They found a routine. Lucas emptied an ice cube tray onto Steve's ribs, and passes it to Max, who passes it to Dustin. Dustin refills the tray and puts it back into the freezer. However, Joyce's 3 ice cube trays lasted about an hour. Max and Dustin run around the kitchen, filling cups, bowls, anything that will hold water, to freeze. They ran out of room in the freezer, so Dustin and Max headed outside to let the water freeze in the cool, night air.

They keep it up through the night. At 4 am, Dustin insists on taking over by himself, pointing out that Lucas and Max are more tired than him and need sleep. They reluctantly agree, and head to where the others are all asleep.

Dustin shakes himself awake. Steve doesn't seem to be in any impending distress, so, as the first one awake, Dustin roots through the Byer's pantry in search for anything he deems edible. His rifling through disturbs Steve's sleep, and Steve slowly sits up with Dustin's help. Hopper walks into the kitchen.

"Mr. Sinclair tells me you took care of this guy through the night." Hopper comments.

"Well, you were being overprotective of El, and, Steve's like a mom to us." Dustin explains, Steve reddening at the statement. Hopper rolls his eyes.

"You got some real good kids here, Harrington. They might even grow up to become doctors someday." Hopper says, knowing the kids patched him up fine.

"So, do you prefer Steve, or Mom?" Dustin asks as soon as Hopper leaves.

Steve groans, but Dustin knows he's hiding a laugh.

THE END.